



2016 FGC Gathering

July 3 to July 9, 2016

College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, Minnesota



Text of the Message Shared by the General Secretary of FGC on Sunday Concerning White Supremacy, FGC and the Gathering

Updated 7 July 2016

Preface

In light of the deeply disturbing shooting deaths by police of Philando Castile in St. Paul, Alton Sterling in Louisiana, and Gerry Williams in North Carolina, the need to confront and dismantle systemic racism within our hearts, within our institutions, and within our countries grows more glaring by the day.

Many Friends here at the Gathering have requested a transcript of what was shared Sunday evening. That was made available in print and online yesterday. It also follows at the end of this document. There have also been requests for more background information as well as an update on some of the steps that have been taken at the Gathering since Sunday's message.

Background

For the past few years, FGC has hosted a pre-conference for Friends of Color. The intention of this event is create an opportunity for Friends of Color to gather together in fellowship prior to the start of the Gathering. For many of these Friends, they may be the only person of color in their local Quaker meeting. Therefore, meeting together is an important way to feel supported as there can be challenges in being the only Friend of Color in a dominant white setting. The pre-conference is also valuable because it creates a web of support among Friends of color so that they feel more empowered to engage with the entire Gathering community, which is also predominantly white.

Distressingly, a number of Friends of Color experienced micro-aggressions and harassment from campus security after arriving for the pre-conference. There were reports that campus security followed some Friends of Color through parking lots and that security also surveilled and profiled them in various ways. This made these Friends deeply uncomfortable for reason everyone can understand. No one should ever be treated this way—and it's made even more egregious given these Friends were making a financial and time commitment to go on a spiritual retreat.

What this episode lifted up with great clarity is that the Gathering often locates itself in places where Friends of Color have had negative experiences either on campus or in the surrounding community. Friends of Color have lifted up for more than a decade that this is very real and serious problem and that FGC has failed to concretely and successfully address the situation. This has been a systemic failure over a long period of time and it must change. While FGC has



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tried to find historically black colleges in the past to host us, or find more diverse urban campuses where Friends of Color might feel safer, it's also true that we have not succeeded in doing so. There have been reasons cited as to why, but regardless of the whys we must find a solution so that the Gathering becomes a safe container for all Friends, not just white Friends. One glaring problem is there have been no Friends of Color involved in site selection. Friends of Color must have a more direct role in site selection and have positions of authority within the structure of FGC. As the General Secretary of FGC, I apologize to all Friends and especially Friends of Color that this very real and very painful problem has not been properly addressed. This Gathering has brought into stark relief that FGC as an institution must find a way forward so that we can become the community we have been working and praying to become.

What Has Happened Since

The first step was for our Gathering Coordinator to engage with our host about how security is being handled. The report I received was that the meeting went well. The sisters and the administration have a commitment to hospitality and were concerned to learn that Friends within our community were having a negative experience. It was agreed that patrols would be lessened. Also, they volunteered to move some of their security patrols out of cars and into golf carts or on to foot in an effort to lessen their own visibility and try to create a more comfortable space for Friends. We appreciate the campus hearing our concerns and taking steps to try to create a more hospitable environment for all Friends for the remainder of our time here. It's my prayer that these steps are creating a better experience for Friends of Color.

The above was also a learning for us as organizers. While we often have talks with campus security before the Gathering about various issues, we want to more proactively suggest to future campuses ways that their security units can reduce their visibility and create a greater feeling of welcome for all Friends.

In terms of FGC and site selection, we've begun the conversation of how we can change our structure and processes so that we can do our very best to secure future sites that reflect the needs of all Friends, not just white Friends. We hope Friends will keep in mind that next year's site has already been selected and preparation for Niagara is well underway. Locations must be booked long in advance. With that said, we will make changes within FGC as quickly as possible and do our best to create a better future together.

Text of the Message from Sunday Evening

3 July 2016

The milk of human love can go sour when we conform to the norms of the dominant American culture, a White Supremacist culture where whiteness trumps any card, no matter how worthy.

Today I have again been reminded that the culture of FGC, in spite of our intentions, mirrors that dominant White Supremacist culture with cruel severity and persistence.



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On the stage, our facing bench, sit many of those who led and supported the organization as well as implemented this Gathering. I ask you, who sits there? Where are the people of color who are Quaker or who work for this organization?

Some people of color have, yet again, experienced harassment and micro-aggression from security forces on this campus this weekend.

We practice White Supremacy in our isolation among “people like us” and away from the masses perceived as “not Quaker material”—a persistent addiction that grows out of the fear that we might change if we became more diverse.

This campus was chosen by a committee of FGC that spoke to the direct perceived needs of the white majority of FGC. Assumptions were made that the needs of people of color would not be otherwise.

Denial

This town, which is far from reflecting the racial demographic of this nation, is a place which the people of color at the pre-conference Gathering were cautioned to approach only in threes. Why? if one is injured, there is a second to stay with them, and a third to come back here for help.

An FGC committee chose this town. Who was at that table?

This is the latest of many such choices.

Denial

This concern is at the center of our possibilities for spiritual growth

- As individuals
- As the organization FGC
- As Quakers

White Supremacy distracts us from our work as Quakers. We are the body of Christ. Do we use our whole body, or just the parts we consider pretty enough?

I invite you, in your worship to consider the following queries:



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1) What has been my response to the call for spiritual growth that would be brought by inclusion?

How can I join with others and...

2) Admit that we were powerless over having been “colonized” by our White Supremacist culture—that our lives fall short of their full human potential because of this colonization

How can I join with others and...

3) come to believe that we could work in community with others to interrupt White Supremacy and practice a culture based on partnership rather than domination

How can I join with others and...

4) decide to turn our will and our lives over to Wholeness in Spirit and Truth